



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Puerto Rico 2014**

Mar 23, 2014 to Mar 29, 2014

Eric Hynes & Lena Senko

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE.*

Thanks so much for joining Lena and me on this island adventure. We enjoyed wonderful weather, some great local guides, beautiful birding sites, and most importantly: a clean sweep of all 17 Puerto Rican endemics! A number of Greater Antillean endemics were seen as well.

Peggy got us off to a great start by spotting a Puerto Rican Screech-Owl roosting in the bamboo. Our local guide for the morning, Gabriel Lugo, helped us access the restricted area of Rio Abajo State Forest. It was so worth it. We scored the endangered but recovering Puerto Rican Parrot for the first time on this tour in well over a decade.

Cambalache State Forest (Bosque Estatal de Cambalache) was a great second stop. We parked under a singing Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo and followed it up with close Puerto Rican Tody and a yummy picnic lunch. The afternoon of our first full day had two noteworthy stops: the "flamingo pond" and Guajataca for White-tailed Tropicbirds.

Laguna Cartagena National Wildlife Refuge and Guanica Biosphere Reserve were our destinations on day two and they did not disappoint. We started the day with hummingbirds and the endangered Yellow-shouldered Blackbird right in the village of La Parguera, and we ended it surrounded by Puerto Rican Nighthjars in Guanica at dusk.

My dear friend Julio Gallardo, the graduate student working on the highly endangered venator subspecies of Sharp-shinned Hawk, had all the Maricao Highlands specialties lined up for us on day three. The Elfin-woods Warbler is only found up in this region, and we scored great looks for everyone at the Puerto Rican Vireo. The Ruddy Quail-Doves had us turning in circles up at Susua State Forest (Bosque Estatal de Susua) in the afternoon.

We studied shorebirds in the morning on day four at Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge, then crossed the island in the afternoon. A spur off our easterly route put us near Comerio, and we quickly spotted the subtly beautiful Plain Pigeon before continuing onto Casa Cubuy Ecolodge.

Our final day in the field was spent at Humacao Nature Reserve and in the port community of Fajardo. The mangrove swamps of the reserve yielded some wetland specialists and our best looks at Puerto Rican Flycatcher. Patience was the key to good looks at Green-throated Carib.

Puerto Rico is one of many wonderful island adventures we offer. I hope our paths cross again on another island or continent sometime soon.

Take care and good birding,

--Eric



*The endemic Puerto Rican Woodpecker is simply gorgeous. (Photo by guide Eric Hynes)*

**KEYS FOR THIS LIST**

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

**BIRDS**

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**WEST INDIAN WHISTLING-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna arborea*) – We scored this regional endemic at Laguna Cartagena NWR

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Anas discors*) – Numerous at a couple of sites

**WHITE-CHEEKED PINTAIL** (*Anas bahamensis*) – Good looks on several occasions

**RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – The drakes in high breeding plumage are almost comical with those bright blue bills

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**LEAST GREBE** (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – A few in the flamingo farm pond west of Camuy

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – The little, striped chick on the back of the adult at Humacao Nature Reserve was a real highlight.

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

**AMERICAN FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) – We saw the entire Puerto Rican population of this eye-catching species -- 1. This bird likely dispersed from the Dominican Republic or one of the other nearby breeding colonies.

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

**WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon lepturus*) – Seen well from the cliffs at Guajataca

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata magnificens*) – Common along the coast

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

**BROWN BOOBY** (*Sula leucogaster*) – Nice scope views of an immature bird in Fajardo

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

**BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – An everyday bird

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – Few and far between on Puerto Rico

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*) – Seen daily in a variety of habitat types

**SNOWY EGRET** (*Egretta thula*) – Strictly tied to wetland sites

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** (*Egretta caerulea*) – Several at Humacao, including a beautiful pied immature bird

**TRICOLORED HERON** (*Egretta tricolor*) – Another bird we saw only at Humacao Nature Reserve

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Abundant

**GREEN HERON** (*Butorides virescens*) – Conspicuous at Laguna Cartagena NWR and at Humacao Nature Reserve

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Surprisingly scarce this year; may be related to water levels

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – The immature bird on our walk in La Parguera was our only sighting

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

**GLOSSY IBIS** (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Seen well at the flamingo farm pond and at Laguna Cartagena NWR

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) – Restricted to the western side of the island

Pandionidae (Osprey)

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – At Laguna Cartagena NWR

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (CARIBBEAN)** (*Accipiter striatus venator*) – Thanks to Julio Gallardo, we got on this incredibly rare subspecies first thing upon arrival in the Maricao Highlands

**RED-TAILED HAWK (JAMAICENSIS)** (*Buteo jamaicensis jamaicensis*) – This widespread raptor occurs at some of its highest densities on parts of Puerto Rico and is the nominate race.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**SORA** (*Porzana carolina*) – Heard only at Laguna Cartagena NWR [\*]

**PURPLE GALLINULE** (*Porphyrio martinicus*) – A few around at Laguna Cartagena NWR

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*) – At several of the wetland sites

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*) – Surprisingly few this year

**CARIBBEAN COOT** (*Fulica caribaea*) – We studied the extensive white frontal shield on some very cooperative birds at Humacao

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Watching these elegant shorebirds at Cabo Rojo NWR is always a treat

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Just a few at Cabo Rojo NWR

**WILSON'S PLOVER** (*Charadrius wilsonia*) – Great looks at Cabo Rojo NWR

**SEMPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Seen more days than not but never numerous

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*) – On a couple occasions

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*) – Some individuals were starting to acquire their spots

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Nice comparisons with the next species

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – At multiple sites in small numbers

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – We spotted a few along the coast at the beginning and end of the tour

**STILT SANDPIPER** (*Calidris himantopus*) – Numerous at Cabo Rojo NWR

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*) – Just a few around this year

**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris fuscicollis*) – We took our time studying these birds at Cabo Rojo NWR

**SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris pusilla*) – Provided a nice comparison to the larger, and longer-winged cousin immediately above

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**BONAPARTE'S GULL** (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Lena got us on a small gull flying away in Fajardo. It may not of have been the most exciting species but this was the most unlikely sighting of the tour. I'm not sure how many records there are for Puerto Rico. This is farther south than the species normally winters.

**LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – A few at Fajardo

**ROYAL TERN** (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Most days when we watched the coast for any length of time, one or two would fly by

**SANDWICH TERN (CABOT'S)** (*Thalasseus sandvicensis acuflavidus*) – We watched a small flock fly in at Cabo Rojo NWR. Good thing we scoped them straight away because they took off shortly there after.

#### Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Common [I]

**SCALY-NAPED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas squamosa*) – Common and widespread on this island (in forested landscapes)

**PLAIN PIGEON** (*Patagioenas inornata wetmorei*) – The little community outside Comerio comes through for us again! I maintain this is one of the worst bird names.

**AFRICAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia roseogrisea*) – Conspicuous in La Parguera [I]

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Everywhere

**ZENAIDA DOVE** (*Zenaida aurita*) – Just as common as White-winged

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*) – Only a few in the southwest

**COMMON GROUND-DOVE** (*Columbina passerina portoricensis*) – The mini dove

**KEY WEST QUAIL-DOVE** (*Geotrygon chrysia*) – Stunning that we had a pair be so cooperative at Cambalache, if only for a few moments

**RUDDY QUAIL-DOVE** (*Geotrygon montana*) – Plenty of fleeting glimpses and heard birds but that sustained good look eluded us

#### Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**MANGROVE CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus minor*) – Despite the name, this species can be found in a wide variety of habitats

**PUERTO RICAN LIZARD-CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus vieilloti*) – That one singing just above the vans upon arrival at Cambalache was unforgettable [E]

**SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** (*Crotophaga ani*) – Common and cooperative

#### Strigidae (Owls)

**PUERTO RICAN SCREECH-OWL** (*Megascops nudipes*) – Peggy was locked into this species. What a great show we enjoyed at Rio Abajo. [E]

#### Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

**PUERTO RICAN NIGHTJAR** (*Antrostomus noctitherus*) – He heard plenty at Guanica and even saw one in flight well enough to catch the white in the tail several times [E]

#### Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

**ANTILLEAN MANGO** (*Anthracothorax dominicus aurentus*) – A widespread species in the lowlands, we saw plenty in La Parguera

**GREEN MANGO** (*Anthracothorax viridis*) – The male in the sun up a La Torre de Piedra (Tower of Stone) gave us quite a show [E]

**GREEN-THROATED CARIB** (*Eulampis holosericeus*) – This beauty is restricted to the east coast of the island. We saw it well at Humacao and again at the Fajardo Inn gardens.

**PUERTO RICAN EMERALD** (*Chlorostilbon maugaeus*) – The long, forked tail of the male is impressive [E]

**ANTILLEAN CRESTED HUMMINGBIRD (LESSER ANTILLES)** (*Orthorhynchus cristatus exilis*) – Another species found only on the east coast of the island

#### Todidae (Todies)

**PUERTO RICAN TODY** (*Todus mexicanus*) – These charismatic little guys tied the PR Parrot for bird of the trip. [E]

#### Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Just a couple brief encounters

#### Picidae (Woodpeckers)

**PUERTO RICAN WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes portoricensis*) – This gorgeous woodpecker was a another favorite for most people [E]

#### Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

**AMERICAN KESTREL (EASTERN CARIBBEAN)** (*Falco sparverius caribaeorum*) – This resident subspecies showed more mottling and a darker tone to its plumage than most are used to seeing in North America

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – A couple brief sightings of birds in flight

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – That soaring bird at the flamingo pond rounded up the ducks and shorebirds nicely in front of us

#### Psittacidae (Parrots)

**MONK PARAKEET** (*Myiopsitta monachus*) – Nest-building in a coconut palm [I]

**WHITE-WINGED PARAKEET** (*Brotogeris versicolurus*) – Only Peggy and Eric got on this well-established escapee with confidence while we were driving through Fajardo. [I]

**PUERTO RICAN PARROT** (*Amazona vittata*) – Hooray! After a long absence from any Field Guides trip list, we scored this highly endangered endemic in Rio Abajo. [E]

#### Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

**CARIBBEAN ELAENIA** (*Elaenia martinica*) – We enjoyed up close and personal views of a very responsive bird at Cabo Rojo

**LESSER ANTILLEAN PEWEE (PUERTO RICO)** (*Contopus latirostris blancoi*) – First encountered while waiting to see the parrots

**PUERTO RICAN FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus antillarum*) – Our best looks were at Humacao [E]

**GRAY KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) – Everywhere

**LOGGERHEAD KINGBIRD (PUERTO RICAN)** (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus taylori*) – This distinct subspecies was most conspicuous in the montane forests

*Vireonidae (Vireos)*

**PUERTO RICAN VIREO** (*Vireo latimeri*) – After frustrating looks at several places, we cleaned up this endemic big-time at Maricao [E]

**BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO** (*Vireo altiloquus*) – Heard incessantly and seen occasionally

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**CARIBBEAN MARTIN** (*Progne dominicensis*) – They were overhead in La Parguera

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – Just a few

**CAVE SWALLOW (CARIBBEAN)** (*Petrochelidon fulva puertoricensis*) – Large colonies nesting under the overpasses

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**RED-LEGGED THRUSH (EASTERN)** (*Turdus plumbeus ardosiaceus*) – Heard more often than seen

*Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)*

**PEARLY-EYED THRASHER** (*Margarops fuscatus*) – One of the most obliging species we encountered

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Plenty

*Parulidae (New World Warblers)*

**LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia motacilla*) – Lena and few others who stuck it out on the rainy walk up in El Yunque were rewarded with a sighting of this species

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – The bird at our feet at Cabo Rojo was most memorable

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*) – Nice comparison to the Elfin-woods Warbler up at Maricao

**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Not many

**ELFIN-WOODS WARBLER** (*Setophaga angelae*) – One of the toughest endemics to see but we did very well thanks to Julio [E]

**AMERICAN REDSTART** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Nice looks at Humacao

**NORTHERN PARULA** (*Setophaga americana*) – The most common migrant warbler we came across

**YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia*) – In La Parguera

**PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga discolor*) – Puerto Rico is a popular wintering site for this species. We came across a few individuals each day.

**ADELAIDE'S WARBLER** (*Setophaga adelaidae*) – This gorgeous endemic is common in the dry, lowland forests. [E]

*Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)*

**BANANAQUIT (CARIBBEAN)** (*Coereba flaveola portoricensis*) – If you are going to pick a species as the most widespread and common on Puerto Rico, Bananaquit is the leading candidate.

**YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Tiaris olivaceus bryanti*) – Beautiful head pattern on this tiny bird; we saw it well along the entrance road to Laguna Cartagena NWR

**BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Tiaris bicolor omissus*) – A few around most days

**PUERTO RICAN BULLFINCH** (*Loxigilla portoricensis*) – The Northern Cardinal-like song with the cymbal crash at the end [E]

**PUERTO RICAN TANAGER** (*Nesospingus speculiferus*) – We could not have asked for a more cooperative bird up at Monte del Estado [E]

**PUERTO RICAN SPINDALIS** (*Spindalis portoricensis*) – We saw this on several occasions but you can never get enough views of this beauty [E]

*Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)*

**YELLOW-SHOULDERED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius xanthomus*) – The village of La Parguera is the best and nearly the last place to see this endangered endemic. [E]

**GREATER ANTILLEAN GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus niger brachypterus*) – An everyday bird

**SHINY COWBIRD** (*Molothrus bonariensis*) – Also an everyday bird but not as numerous as the previous species

**PUERTO RICAN ORIOLE** (*Icterus portoricensis*) – We saw this endemic almost daily but it never stuck around for long [E]

**VENEZUELAN TROUPIAL** (*Icterus icterus*) – It is considered an introduced species but I don't care -- this is about as good-looking as a bird gets. [I]

*Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)*

**ANTILLEAN EUPHONIA** (*Euphonia musica sclateri*) – We saw a few in the canopy while waiting for the calling parrots to come into view.

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Unavoidably an everyday bird [I]

*Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)*

**ORANGE BISHOP** (*Euplectes franciscanus*) – The lighting wasn't great but there was a flock bobbing on the end of grass stalks roadside in the southwest end of the island. [I]

*Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)*

**ORANGE-CHEEKED WAXBILL** (*Estrilda melpoda*) – Tiny gems [I]

**BRONZE MANNIKIN** (*Spermestes cucullatus*) – We bumped into this introduced species several times. [I]

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## MAMMALS

**SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) – A couple of quick views [I]

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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**Totals for the tour: 115 bird taxa and 1 mammal taxa**